

Five-day wait for an ED bed

BRAD CROUCH

THE doctors' union has labelled wait times at the Royal Adelaide Hospital's emergency department a "shocker".

The SA Salaried Medical Officers Association (SASMOA) said ambulance ramping at the RAH was on the rise and some people were stuck in the emergency department for longer than 24 hours waiting for a bed – including an elderly patient who waited nearly five days. SASMOA officials in-

Union ups the ante on RAH 'dysfunction'

spected the ED after a weekend of ramping and discovered the elderly mental health patient had been stuck there for 110 hours.

The inspection was triggered after the union received reports of 26 patients waiting for beds, including 16 mental health patients.

The union now plans a public campaign with the hope

community concern will see more resources allocated.

SASMOA senior industrial officer Bernadette Mulholland described the situation as "pretty terrible".

"We were advised one patient ramping in an ambulance deteriorated so badly they had to be rushed in for emergency treatment and the doctors say he would not have deteriorat-

ed if he had been in the hospital receiving care." Ms Mulholland said.

"There is now an unacceptable level of dysfunction and it is increasingly difficult to provide proper care for mental health patients.

"The clinicians are becoming increasingly frustrated, anxious and distressed – they want to give people the care

they need but are not getting the resources."

ED clinicians have written to the Central Adelaide Local Health Network (CALHN) board, which now makes decisions on resources.

CALHN chief executive Lesley Dwyer said the patient who waited 110 hours needed a very specific care bed.

"We really do apologise; it is

not our intention to have people waiting that long," she said.

"We are truly sorry for the stress, not only to the patient, but to the person caring for them and our own staff.

"There were delays across the weekend in finding beds for mental health patients."

Ms Dwyer noted efforts to relieve pressure included plans for a new mental health crisis care centre near the RAH.

Opposition health spokesman Chris Picton said ramping was "going from bad to worse".